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spots from the linseed-oil used on the mould, and otherwise unsatisfactory.

School reopened, and the artist had not decorated the studio with new casts, by any means. Slowly, by many experiments, and with some suggestions from a friendly dentist, she learned the right way, which is to sift the plaster slowly into a bowl of water, without stirring it at all, but, after allowing it to settle, to pour off the superfluous water and use the sediment, which will be of the right consistency and perfectly smooth for the impression. The hand should first be oiled thoroughly with castor-oil, and after the first half of the mould is taken, its edges must be trimmed smooth, that the second may fit snugly to it. The oil must be used freely on hand and mould. When both moulds are done, they need a thin coat of shellac, dissolved in alcohol, which will dry immediately. Then a light coat of oil should be given to the two sides before they are placed together. A piece of wire twisted into a loop, with the ends pressed into the soft plaster after the mould is filled, secures a useful means of hanging up the cast; which will prove smooth and white, and be easily separated from the mould, if awkward curves or angles have been avoided in taking it.

Try it, O enthusiastic reader! but remember—like many another thing—the taking of a plaster cast is perfectly simple—after you know how!

M. A. HARRIS.

WE gave particulars last month of an excellent fixative for charcoal and pastel drawings. There is sometimes no little difficulty in applying such, but a good old plan, which, however, requires some practice, is to take a thin piece of book muslin on a stretcher and put it over the drawing, which is to lie flat on a table, right side up. The brush dipped in the fixative is passed quickly and regularly over the muslin, which it penetrates in small drops sufficiently to fix the drawing.

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THE chief technical difficulty to be overcome by the novice in etching lies in the fact that the drawing must be reversed. The plate when covered by the "ground" ready for use is blackened by being smoked with the flame of a wax taper. In scratching through this ground with a sharp steel point, the bright copper is exposed by every stroke, and looks light against the dark ground. These lines, when "bitten" by the immersion of the plate in a nitric acid bath become black in the printing, while the parts protected by the ground remain white.

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IN etching it is easy to correct errors again and again if necessary, but a single proof, unless the drawing be very elaborate, will generally suffice to reveal at a glance all the shortcomings of the plate. When retouching, the original proof should be kept in view.

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AS printing is not the work of the amateur but of a regular workman, we will only give such instructions as will enable the former to direct the operation to the result which he desired. These apply to the preparation and inking of the plate. The printer should first clean it with spirits of turpentine; then ink it evenly all over with a dabber; next, with coarse muslin, take off evenly so much of the ink as will enable the design to be clearly seen. With the palm of the hand he will make some parts clearer yet. The margins will be cleaned and lights taken out with whitening and a piece of chamois or rag. Then comes the operation of *retoussage*—that is, regaining full and soft blacks where required, by drawing the ink out of the lines with a wisp of very fine muslin. If perfectly white lights are desired, the work of taking them out should come last. The plate is then ready for the press. The paper is prepared by moistening with a sponge. If the paper is hard Holland or Whatman, it is well to soften the surface a little by passing over it, while wet, a stiff bristle brush, always in the one direction.

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THERE need be no difficulty about the printing if it be only amateur work. It can be done on any copper plate engraver's press. It is different in the printing of the work of professionals, who are very particular and entrust the "proving" of their plates only to expert printers of etchings. Some styles of printing, however, greatly assist the etcher; and a clever printer can interpret an etching, aided by the use of the wiping rag, in such a manner that a plain proof from the identical plate will hardly look like the work of the same hand; but this needs much artistic knowledge in the printer.

## China Painting.

LESSONS BY A PRACTICAL DECORATOR.

IX.—ROYAL WORCESTER DECORATION (CONTINUED.)



them being very much softer than that on china.

In buying a piece, unless the artist can tell the difference, the question should always be asked, "Is this ware or china?" It is a very important thing to know, for it makes a vast difference in the treatment of the decoration, as more can be done in one firing with the ware.

In selecting a piece always try to get one that is free, as far possible, from imperfections, by which I mean cracks, rough places that are perceptible to the touch, and little black spots or holes. Each piece must be carefully examined. It is always safest to put a background on the American ware, for there is a possibility of its turning a light gray when fired or being discolored in some way. I will except the fine Belleek wares made in Trenton. The matt wax or gouache colors are opaque, and will cover up any slight imperfection. The glaze is so soft on all these wares that it absorbs the colors; the Lacroix about one eighth, some of the lighter shades even more. Therefore, all the colors, no matter of what kind, should always be painted a little stronger, or the decoration may turn out weaker than intended, and so spoil the effect.

Our American wares have a great advantage over china from the fact that backgrounds on those can be laid on and dried, the design painted in and outlined with raised paste for gold, then dried again, the gold put on, and all done in one firing. I am speaking now of the gold and the paste which I have always used, and I know exactly how they will fire. I cannot say with any certainty that those employed by other persons can be treated in this way, but if they are first-class materials, I do not see why there should be any failure. Most amateurs have the mistaken idea, in using paste, that it is necessary to build it up as high as possible. No matter how rough and uneven it may look, if it is only high they are satisfied. I have seen roses outlined where the paste was put on in little lumps, no attempt being made to connect them. I would advise every student, who is unable to obtain the services of a competent teacher, before commencing this style of decoration, to go to some store where there are examples of Royal Worcester, Doulton or Crown Derby—any one of them will answer—and closely examine the workmanship. They will find that for all small decorations the paste is in very low relief, and the lines are smooth and even, most of them being as fine and delicate as a cambric needle. Of course it has taken time and patience to arrive at such a state of perfection; but that need not discourage the student. It should rather act as a stimulant. Our American women have so much determination and energy that they are often able to produce as good work in one year as foreign workmen do in two or three years of constant labor. A celebrated English teacher once said that he was sorry that he had ever given a lesson in America, for his pupils soon knew more than he did—they were so clever.

Most dealers in china paints keeps this paste for sale. A number advertise Hancock's paste, already prepared in little pans or tubes similar to moist water-colors, to be used with water. I know nothing about it beyond the advertisement, but if it fires and works as well as the paints of the same make, which I have used with success, I can see no reason why it should not be satisfactory. Being all ready to use, it would save both time and labor. Except in this instance of Hancock's preparation, the paste always comes in a dry powder, costing twenty-five cents per bottle.

Mix the paste on a clean palette. To as much paste as can be heaped on a twenty-five cent piece, add four

drops of fat oil. Mix with plenty of turpentine till very smooth and fine. Make it look about as the Lacroix colors do when ready for painting. If it is full of grains it will be in the same condition when fired and the gold will have the same rough appearance. Burnishing will not remedy it. It is very important, therefore, that it should be well ground, however tiresome the operation and hard on the hand. Cover it up and let it stand until ready to use. It will probably be rather hard and dry when uncovered, but will readily yield to the knife and plenty of turpentine. It should be a little thicker than ordinary paint. For fine work a very small brush should be used. If it spreads beyond the line, mix it up with the knife, breathe on it, and let it stand for a few moments for the turpentine to dry out. Go all over the design. If two pieces are being painted, by the time the second is finished the first will be dry enough for another coat. If necessary three coats can be given, for it shrinks a little in firing; but, as I said before, do not build it up too high. Care should be taken not to increase the size of the lines. If any of them have uneven edges take a sharp-pointed stick, moisten in a little water and smooth them off; then dry thoroughly in the oven. Do not put on one coat and dry it and then add another; for in some cases it may separate in firing. When dried it is ready for the gold. If it does not dry out hard and even, go over it with a thin coat, without any fat oil. It is always safe to apply two coats of gold.

It is rather difficult to know just how much paste will be required for a design. If any remains on the palette and it is free from lint, do not wipe it off, but put it away where it will be clean, and it can be used again and again, fresh paste being added to it as required. I often keep mine for months. It will sometimes grow fat by standing. In such a case turn a little alcohol over it and let it stand for a few moments. The oil will spread out toward the edge of the palette and the paste will dry out. Then mix with turpentine, and use as before.

The paste is prepared by some students with tar oil instead of fat oil. The former may work more freely, and as it answers the same purpose it is a matter of indifference which is used. If it becomes too fat do not use alcohol, but turpentine, to run off the fat oil.

If the paste is used on china and fired first and comes out with a glaze, it is almost impossible to cover it with gold. It is sometimes cheaper to put the article aside.

In decorating a hair receiver, if raised gold work is used, it can all be done in one firing, for the article in question is "ware." If a brush and comb tray is to accompany it, it will require two firings; for these trays, as a general thing, are china.

The gold should be used freely on the paste. It should have two coats in order to have a rich appearance and finish well.

It is not necessary to tint delicate china. The flowers can be painted with Lacroix colors, outlined and veined with the paster fired and then gilded; or the gouache colors can be used. If any of the flowers or leaves look weak they should be repainted for the second firing.

I saw recently a charming set of tea cups and saucers from the Minton factory. They were tinted with yellow ochre very delicately, giving the effect of an old ivory background. The decoration was a spray of hawthorn blossoms and leaves. The leaves and stems were done in red gold, the flowers in green gold, all outlined with paste; the handles were solid gold. If the handles of any article are of a fancy shape, two colored golds can be used, and so variety be given to the work.

Pansies, violets, maiden-hair or ferns of any kind look well with the raised outlines on a delicate background.

A tête-à-tête set would be effective tinted in dark yellow bronze with green gold and platinum ferns. A pretty border might be made for the edge of single fern leaves connected with a dot, or joined on to each other. The ferns might be painted in bronze green and outlined with gold, with here and there a small silver fern. It is never advisable to use very much silver.

Bronze green merely clouded with gold, with a green and gold handle, if it be a cup or a jug so painted, is a simple but very pretty form of decoration.

M. B. ALLING.

AMONG the designs in color for china painting almost ready for publication is a charming cracker jar design by Mrs. Crosby, in the blue and gold style of decoration described in the present number by Miss F. E. Hall. We have other designs in color of Royal Worcester decoration by Mrs. Crosby quite as attractive as the examples published in our September and October numbers.

## NOTES FOR BEGINNERS.

ALWAYS clean your brushes thoroughly immediately after using. To do this, first press out as much of the color as possible with a soft cloth held between the finger and thumb. Afterward free the brush from the color that remains by rinsing it thoroughly in turpentine. Let the final rinsing be in clean turpentine. Too often the brushes are merely dipped into turpentine already so loaded with color that to cleanse them in it properly is impossible. When clean pass the brushes lightly backward and forward on a soft cloth to prevent their stiffening when dry. Finally smooth the hairs to their accustomed shape and lay the brushes aside where there is no danger of their being bent; for a bent brush is entirely useless, and when once in this condition it is hard to restore it to working order.

\* \* \*

NEVER use a brush for mineral water colors that has already been used for oils, unless it has first been thoroughly washed in soap and water, and afterward rinsed in alcohol (to counteract the effect of the soap, which renders the hair dry and harsh) and then dried on a soft cloth.

\* \* \*

THESE remarks do not apply to stipplers, softeners, and blenders. They should be washed carefully with soap in warm water and afterward dried on a cloth by flicking backward and forward till the hairs are as evenly spread as when new. To dip them in alcohol before drying will greatly facilitate the process. If this particular kind of brush is not thoroughly restored to its normal condition the surface to which it is applied will surely be streaky and broken.

\* \* \*

CHINA or earthenware that is glazed before painting on may be thoroughly cleansed for working on if much soiled by adding a little common soda to the water, provided the article is well rinsed in clear water afterward. When dry always wipe the china over with a little turpentine, and dry it before beginning to paint. Such a course not only aids the flattening of the color when applying a tint, but it also greatly assists the laying on of the color smoothly for a first painting. In addition—which is a very important consideration—it makes the slippery surface as easy to draw on with a lead-pencil as if it were paper.

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THE question as to the proper mediums to use is often a puzzling one, especially for a beginner. A medium from an artist's standpoint, no matter what branch of art he is pursuing, is any kind of vehicle that will assist the laying on of colors in a proper consistency and retard or hasten their drying according to his special needs. Such is essentially the case in china painting. Indeed, without some means of retarding the too hasty drying of a tint over a large surface it would be next to impossible to blend it with any hope of producing an approach to the perfection of a flat and even tint.

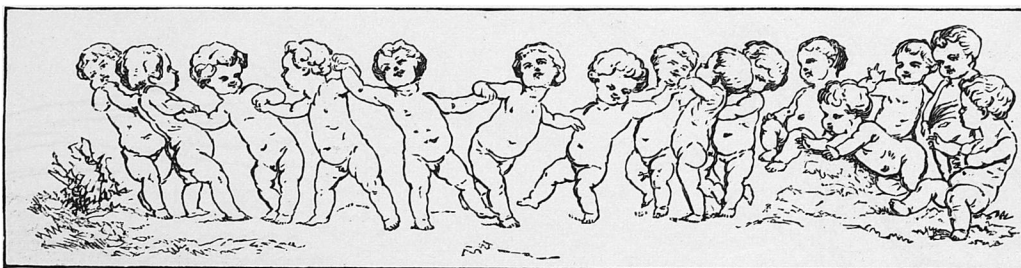
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THE medium commonly in use for tube colors (which are already ground with oil) when somewhat dry and hard on squeezing them out, is spirits of turpentine. If the colors are very dry a suspicion of fat oil may be added. In order to avoid an excess of oil, which renders the color liable to blister in the kiln, it is well to mix a little turpentine and fat oil together in a small vessel before applying it to the color. When applied it should be thoroughly incorporated by means of a palette knife until the pigment is thinned enough for working.

FAT OIL is made by pouring, to begin with, a few drops of spirits of turpentine or spirits of tar into a clean, open vessel exposed to the air, but carefully guarded from dust. As the spirit evaporates the liquid thickens to about the consistency of syrup. Keep on adding a few drops of fresh spirits day by day until enough has been thickened for your purpose. The process is easy enough, but two points are to be noted. First, artificial heat does not accelerate the desired end; it is air, not heat that is needed. The latter causes the whole of the spirit to evaporate, without leaving any thickened deposit. The other point to be observed is that if an excess of the spirit is put out at one time evaporation is much retarded. If near a store where fat oil is obtainable, it is scarcely worth while to go to the trouble of preparing it, but the receipts may be found very useful by those living at a distance from cities.

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If tar oil be used as a medium, then when dilution is necessary spirits of tar must be used as the diluent. The same remark applies to fat oil of turpentine, which must



also be diluted only with its own spirit. Spirit of tar is more especially recommended for use when laying on paste for raised gold; its use is, however, optional.

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TINTING OIL can be bought already prepared. It is a mixture of oils varying a little according to the fancy of each maker. It is added to the color with a view to keeping tints open which require blending. Some persons take for the same purpose clove or lavender, which doubtless enter into the composition of tinting oils; but clove oil alone is apt to dry so slowly that a great risk is run of getting dust into the tint. There is probably nothing better for the purpose than Cooley's tinting oil.

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DRY COLORS in powder must always be ground for use with oil as well as turpentine, otherwise there is danger of their not adhering properly to the china and rubbing off after firing. Moreover, if too little oil is used the colors will come up dull in parts. On the other hand, an excess of oil causes the color to fry and blister in the kiln. Experience only guided by sound advice will teach the exact proportion to use of any medium, whether of spirit or oil. To an experienced touch it is easy enough to ascertain when the pigments are in a good state for working. It is practically impossible to give any hard and fast rule in the matter, each particular case being subject to varied conditions requiring special treatment. It may, however, be generally assumed that too much oil has been used when the color looks shiny, has a tendency to overflow the outline and dries slowly. On the other hand, if the color is difficult to lay on, looks rough, dries very dull and too rapidly, then, probably, a little more oil is needed.

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IN using dry colors, it is of the utmost importance to grind them with the mediums employed until absolutely smooth and free from grit. A glass muller or palette knife may be employed for this purpose. Do not put out or prepare more color than you need at a sitting; for a frequent cause of failure is the use of colors which have become fat from too long exposure to the air. The same advice applies to tube colors, which by professional

workers are considered unfit for use when they have been out on the palette, say for twenty-four hours. Indeed, the great drawback to tube colors is that being already ground with oil they become too fat for use in the tube if kept long.

## BLUE AND GOLD CHINA DECORATION.

EXCELLENT effects in the decoration of china are often produced by the simplest means, and nothing is more pleasing in its way than monochrome painting in blue, enhanced by appropriate finish in lines of gold.

We are familiar with the striking effects produced by Japanese artists in their rapid, picturesque delineation of various subjects in monochrome upon vases, tea-pots and similar objects. These are the sort of articles that our own amateurs frequently buy to embellish with gold outlines and refire them with satisfactory results; but greater finish of workmanship and far softer effects in color can be obtained by executing the whole of the decoration one's self. Many subjects may be happily employed

in this class of work, either of flowers, figures, landscapes or conventional ornament.

There are several colors on the Lacroix list which will produce tones of dark blue, resembling in some measure the richness of imported work in underglaze. Dark blue (bleu foncé), with the addition

of one-tenth part of dark green No. 7, gives a very trustworthy color, especially if, for a second firing, the darker parts of the design are repainted. Old tile blue and old Rouen blue are of weaker tone, producing in the work an effect of vagueness. Old blue is a color well liked, but its tone is duller than that of dark blue, and has in it a suggestion of purple. Two fire blue is one of the newer paints introduced by Marsching & Co., and is a very beautiful color of a higher key than either of those above named. Two applications and firings are needed to bring out its full beauty.

Any floral design in blue monochrome is much enhanced by a background of Chinese yellow, which should be laid in a clear tint of considerable strength. This color changes greatly in firing, and if the tint is laid too thin its effect may be lost altogether. All tints must, however, be laid with sufficient delicacy to avoid a streaky and uneven surface, one of the worst of faults. The design chosen should be executed with all the smoothness and gradation of tone required by work using the full palette of colors. After the first firing the darkest shading will be greatly enriched by another wash of blue. Any depth of tone desired can be obtained by repeated applications and firings. Amateur workers, in their effort to obtain rich effects in color, often lay on their first washes too heavily, which has a tendency to make the work blister in firing.

If birds are in the design painted, each little pinion of wing and tail should be finished with a line of gold, and other lines may be added at will—for instance, where a high light strikes the head or breast. A gold outline is generally used to surround the whole object.

Cracker jars in French china are very pretty without any background except soft clouds of gold in spots over the surface; or, in lieu of these, an irregular succession of many parallel but broken lines of gold, resembling "water lines." Irregular spots of gold in scattered groups, or any tasteful original device, come well in this style of decoration. Gold lines must never come into direct contact with color, until the latter has been fired. Unfluxed gold is better for use over color than the ordinary fluxed preparation.

F. E. HALL.

